

When the great cities of our country were settled, they were developed near rich agricultural land to assure an adequate food supply. As urban areas continued to sprawl, many fertile acres were consumed and many more were placed at risk. Over the past 10 years, urban sprawl has eaten up over 26 million acres of productive farmland: an area the size of Kentucky has been displaced by urban development. Most of the farmland lost in the country has been located in urban influenced counties—where the density is at least 25 persons per square mile. A recent study by the American Farmland Trust estimated that the farmland in the urban influenced counties was 2.7 times more productive than the remaining U.S. counties. Eighty seven percent of our domestic fruit and nut production is also grown in these threatened counties.

Every citizen should be concerned with a secure U.S. food supply and preservation of productive lands because the loss of farmland affects more than family farmers. Others affected by the land loss include the large agriculture support sector that ranges from fertilizer and equipment suppliers to fruit and vegetable processors. The general public could also face grocery counters half-full of not so fresh, costly produce imported from around the world. Agriculture is a basic and fundamental part of life from the food we eat to the clothes we wear. It is important that during times of fast growth we take a closer look at how our land is being used and how we can protect those that are being displaced by the urban community.

Farming has been placed under new pressures that are coupled with the rising costs of this capital intensive business. For example, farmers putting in a wine grape vineyard will encounter 4 years development costs over \$17,000 dollars per acre above the land acquisition costs. Pistachio farmers should expect at least \$7,000 dollars in preproductive costs per acre and olive growers \$5,000 dollars an acre. These costs could literally double or triple dependent on the value of the land.

Aside from the high start up costs of crops such as orchards and vineyards U.S. farm real estate values also continue to rise. According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture the value of U.S. farm real estate has risen 6.4 percent over the past year to \$832 per acre. This \$832 figure may be rising, but it still does not nearly reflect the cost of acquiring a prime piece of farmland in highly productive, urban-influenced states like California and Florida. An average piece of farmland in California and Florida is worth over \$2,000 and can be worth as much as \$17,000.

Along with high costs farmers continue to be plagued with storms, disease, and pests that destroy many acres of orchards and vineyards annually. Some of this costly acreage has not even reached a productive state. Crops like tangerines and cherries can take 5 to 6 years to reach productivity. In a natural disaster a farmer with a crop in a preproductive state may have trouble sustaining large losses because he does not have a return on his investment. Most farmers do not realize an actual profit for many years after a productive state is achieved. Natural disasters particularly impact small family farms that already have a small profit margin.

As a witness to the rate of urbanization in my own district, I have developed two incentives that would amend the 1986 tax code and

keep families in farming and land in rural uses. I recently introduced H.R. 3749 to amend the tax code to promote replacement of crops destroyed by casualty. This bill will provide an incentive to replant by allowing them to deduct the cost of replanting their destroyed crop in the event of freezing temperatures, disease, drought, or pests, all events that cannot be controlled. It allows farmers to deduct the costs of replacing key infrastructure.

I have also introduced H.R. 520 to make it easier to transfer farms from generation to generation. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture the average size farm in the United States is 469 acres. The land alone of an average farm in California is worth over \$1 million and can be worth as much as \$8 million on prime farm land. These numbers are the primary reasons that I have introduced H.R. 520 to double the current maximum benefit under the estate tax special valuation deduction. A farmer can be worth millions in terms of acreage but that does not necessarily mean that there is cash to pay estate taxes, or—during his life—other unexpected costs. This results in many farmers splitting their land up into parcels and selling out to developers just in order to cover their costs.

Current tax law that allows for \$750,000 in maximum benefits is outdated in accordance to the cost of farming today. After you figure in the value of crops, irrigation systems, improvements (buildings, etc.), and equipment, the value of today's farm may be worth almost twice as much. The bills procection of \$1,500,000 would allow for more continuity in farm acreage when transferring land between generations, avoiding the need for families to split up their land to pay off the estate tax.

Prime agriculture land is being authorized as we speak. Providing these small incentives to America's farmer would encourage families to stay in farming and secure an abundant food supply for the 21st century.

#### TRIBUTE TO VFW POST 8162 OF NASSAU, NEW YORK

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 31, 1996*

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, as you know, one group I have a particular admiration for is our veterans. It was one of the reasons I asked for a seat on the Veterans' affairs Committee in my first term, and it's one of the reasons I fought so hard to have the Veterans Administration elevated to a full, cabinet-level department.

And one group was always right beside me in such efforts, Veterans of Foreign Wars. I can think of no group that has done more to promote the interests of our Nation's veterans. Today, I'd like to single out one VFW post, a very special one which is typical of VFW posts across the country.

VFW Post 8162 of Nassau, NY is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Think of that, Mr. Speaker. It's first members were, of course, the boys just returning from Europe and the Pacific and every other theater of World War II. Then, in the early 1950's, they were joined by veterans from the Korean war. In another 15 years, the veterans of the Viet-

nam War arrived on the scene. And finally, in this decade, we've seen those who served in the Persian Gulf join their older comrades.

From its beginning, Post 8162 was made up of citizen heroes, who left their homes and loved ones to undergo incredible hardships and sacrifices, including the supreme sacrifice, in defense of our freedoms. But the majority survived to return home, complete their educations, find jobs, raise families, and become the most respected members of their communities.

I've met many of the members of Post 8162. I was thinking of them and of other veterans like them when Ronald Reagan signed into law my measure making the Veterans Administration a cabinet department in 1988. With that signature, we made sure the interests of veterans would always have the ear of the U.S. President.

It is to those same interests that Post 8162 has so faithfully applied itself for 50 years, since that first beginning on August 12, 1946.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all members to join me in a special salute to VFW Post 8162 of Nassau, NY, as it celebrates its 50th year.

#### OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

HON. STEVEN SCHIFF

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 31, 1996*

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the following graduating high school students from the First Congressional District of New Mexico who have been awarded to the Congressional Certificate of Merit.

#### CERTIFICATE OF MERIT AWARD WINNERS 1996

Albuquerque Evening High School, Vera Lujan; Albuquerque High School, Monica Becerra; Bernalillo High School, Lance Darnell; Cibola High School, Jessica Shaw; Del Norte High School, Kathryn Gruchalla; Eldorado High School, Karli Massey, Matt Kaiser; Estancia High School, Wayne Davidson; Evangel Christian Academy, Jonathon E. Rael; Highland High School, Kelly Shannon McCormick; La Cueva High School, Tracy Carpenter; Los Lunas High School, Nicole J. Nagy; Menaul High School, Adam Cherry; Mountainair High School, Jessica Quintana; Rio Grande High School, Robert C. Coleman; Sandia High School, Krista Madril; Sandia Preparatory School, Anne Elizabeth Mannal; High School, St. Pius X High School, Autumn Nicole Grady, Laura C. Miner; Valley High School, Matthew Tennison; and West Mesa, Shane Gutierrez.

It is my pleasure to recognize these outstanding students for their academic and leadership accomplishments as well as for their participation in school, community service, and civil activities.

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 25, 1996*

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3820, the Campaign Finance